

via pacis

The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

December, 2007

www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

Volume 31, No. 4



A Christmas Comeuppance

by Mona Shaw

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth,
good will to men."*

This third stanza comes from the famous Henry Longfellow poem and my favorite Christmas carol, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." And, it is this verse that has expressed my honest observation with more than a little consistency.

Still, no matter how much I try, and many

years I've tried very hard, I cannot completely ignore Christmas. Like many, I take great issue with our cultural celebration of Christmas and find it gravely lacking and mostly shameful. Not only because it has little to do with the birth of Christ, which it doesn't. Aghast with materialism, it is that special time of year when parents will pummel each other over some popular and coveted toy. Consumption at Christmas time exceeds ostentation and transforms the nation into a toxic lake oozing and bubbling with the worship of opulence and

gorging. Rather than shining light on life's blessings, it just as often amplifies what is lacking in our lives. If you can't buy some loved one a gift, if you're still single when you wish you were married, if you just lost your job, or if someone you love just died, this all feels much worse if it happens at Christmas. Finding oneself alone on Christmas can lead to thoughts of suicide that wouldn't occur in one's mind any other day of the year. In fact, the suicide rate is highest at Christmas.

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Dear Des Moines Catholic Worker friends and supporters,

It is hard to believe that the holiday season is upon us once again! We all know there is no better gift than to see and know the appreciation on the face of someone in need. It is this and our pledge to do the Works of Mercy that bring us to ask for your help. Without your continued support and prayers, none of what we do is possible.

The upcoming winter months leave us concerned not only for our brothers and sisters, whom we serve on a daily basis, but for all who are without and for all who are in fear of being without. We are also concerned with the mundane issues of paying our bills and keeping our doors open for another year. That is why we come to you with our yearly Christmas appeal, knowing that when our financial needs are at their greatest, our friends and supporters are the most generous.

By the time this issue of via pacis is printed and in the mail, we will have enough funds to carry us into the New Year but not much further.

The DMCW survives completely on donations. We are not funded by any church or grant money. The donations we receive from our Christmas appeal help cover utilities, property taxes and other operating expenses for the coming year. Plus, any extra helps pay for any necessary house maintenance, repairs and improvements.

Knowing that we are not in this struggle alone continues to sustain us. Just like the lambs of our Lord, we come to you with open hearts. Please help us help those who continue to go without.

Thank you, and God bless us all,
Jackie Robinson
and your friends at the Des Moines Catholic Worker

via pacis

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We thank *Des Moines Register* editorial cartoonist Brian Duffy for the front cover and front page illustrations. They first appeared in the *Register* in the 1980s. They were good then and are perfect now for this Christmas issue.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a daytime drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, a shower or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that foster social justice.

Mailing address:
PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

Bishop Dingman House
1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-243-0765
Residents: Frank Cordero, Mohamed Elkhandaqawi, and Mona Shaw

Msgr. Ligutti House
1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-280-1216
Residents: Jackie Robinson, Ed Bloomer, Norman Searah, Bill Petsche, and Jack Petsche

Lazarus House
1317 8th St.
515-246-1499
Residents: Carla Dawson, Jordan Dawson, John Tuzcu, Kirk Brown, and Irving Schroeder

Phillip Berrigan House
713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-282-4781
Residents: Jacob Olsen, Fran Fuller, and Mike Fuller

Weekly Lectionary Bible Study

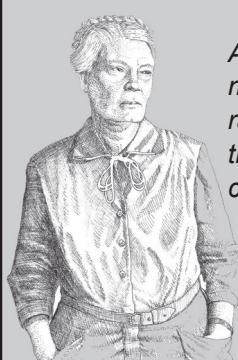
Mondays, 7pm. Berrigan House
Call to confirm.

Weekly Mass or Scripture Service

Fridays, 7:30pm, Dingman House
All are welcome!

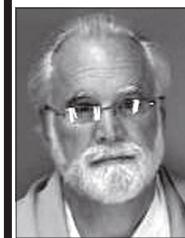
The Chiapas Project

Chiapas Mexico
Richard Flamer
flamerrichard@hotmail.com



As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.

-Dorothy Day

**Editor's Notes**

by Frank Cordero

*Photo taken October 5
by Polk County Jail.*

It was not completely unexpected but still came as a surprise when my guilty plea on October 5 in Polk County traffic court landed me a 30-day sentence. It was Renee Espeland's, Aaron Glynn's and my first court appearance for the trespass charges we received on September 21, when Renee and I were arrested with four area high school students for occupying Senator Chuck Grassley's Des Moines office. Aaron was the only one of the four high school students who was over 18 years old, and therefore charged as an adult.

When the judge found out that we were all pleading guilty, she informed me that my guilty plea would result in my being sentenced to jail. I immediately turned and gave my car keys to John Tuzcu. With no time to prepare, I made a short and sweet statement, "I want you to know it was a great privilege to act with those young people's stand against the unjust, immoral, and illegal war in Iraq. And, any time I serve in jail will only add to that honor and privilege."

The judge complied by sentencing me to 30 days in jail, the maximum penalty.

I can't tell you how good it felt to be hand-cuffed and led through the Polk County Courthouse on my way to jail knowing that I was one of the freest persons in that building that day. Because, I knew I could be sent to jail for 30 days while also knowing that I was backed-up by a community that would make sure everything that was needed to be done in my absence would be done; and, when I was released, all I had to do was to just pick up where I left off.

If you are not on one of our e-mail list-serves and did not get a chance to read my reflections from jail, I invite you to check out our DMCW web page. They are posted there along with many other great things.

Big kudos go to John Tuzcu and Mona Shaw, the most recent additions to our community, whose articles are featured in this issue. John just returned from a fact-finding mission in Israel and the West Bank and writes about it on page 5. Mona, along with being a great writer (see her Christmas story, page 1), has reinvented our web site and taken over the layout of the v.p. What great additions to our community!

Please be generous in your giving to our community with this year's annual appeal. Our need is real, and your support is so appreciated!

Christmas blessings and New Year's joy to all of you.

April 11-13, 2008 International Peace Conference in Omaha to Spotlight StratCom Threat

StratCom's central role in the US bid for the military domination of space was the impetus for Omaha becoming the host site for the 2008 Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space (www.space4peace.org) annual international organizing conference and protest gathering which they designated as "the most dangerous place on the face of the earth." The official dates for the weekend conference are April 11-13

Nebraskans for Peace (www.nebraskansforpeace.org) will serve as the local host for the event.

Founded in 1992, the Global Network is the only international organization focused exclusively on opposing the militarization and weaponization of space, with 130 affiliate members in more than 20 nations.

Holding the 2008 Global Network organizing conference and protest in Omaha will be an opportunity "to shine an international light on the Pentagon's Strategic Command (StratCom) that is now in charge of Star Wars, satellite surveillance and reconnaissance, nuclear weapons targeting, and planning for global preemptive war." said Bruce Gagnon, the Global Network coordinator.

For more information about this important conference contact:

Tim Rinne
State Coordinator
Nebraskans for Peace
402-475-4620
WalterRinne@neb.rr.com



Photo by Joyce Naffier

Protestors carry flag-draped coffins toward the State of Iowa Capitol Building in Des Moines during an observance of the International Day of Action on October 27, 2007, when thousands throughout the nation called for an immediate end to the war in Iraq. Fifty coffins were carried to the capitol grounds—half were draped with U.S. flags and half with Iraqi flags—to honor and symbolize the lives lost in that conflict. Organized by the Progressive Coalition of Central Iowa (PCCI), the Des Moines event was co-sponsored by twenty other Iowa peace groups including the Des Moines Catholic Worker. More about the event is available on the DMCW website.



By Carla Dawson

Hi, everyone! I hope this finds all of you recovering from your Thanksgiving blessings. I am past the due date for my v.p. article. I keep Frank on his toes by being the second to last finishing my article.

We have been truly blessed this Thanksgiving season. Moulton School had their 12th annual Thanks and Giving food drive. For the last 11 years, we have been the recipients of this heartfelt blessing. It is true what they say "a child will lead them." These children and staff members have shown the power of the least in our society. We will be able to help many families from their donations.

We were blessed to have a former FIA (Faith in Action) member, Allie, from OLIH (Our Lady's Immaculate Heart) church, and her father Charles bring us a donation of food and money. It was great to meet her father and see how important the CW has been in her life.

We had a very special three-generation family from OLIH come and spend Thanksgiving day with us. I could not have asked for better volunteers. They came, worked, laughed, and learned, all while being servants for our guests. They made a lasting impression on our hearts. Thank you, Susan and family.

We were visited for a month by John Baker, who is looking into living in our community. He was a terrific volunteer. We had a great time dancing in the kitchen and wish him well in his travels.

Claire Quinney was here during Thanksgiving break and is always a sight for sore eyes. Her gifts are too numerous to mention. We are so proud of her for graduating from college.

We hosted SODaPOP folks in November. It was great to meet people who are committed to ending the war against Iraq and not starting a war against Iran. These are people who believe in peace, and who are willing to risk arrest by telling the truth about our government's lies. We look forward to their return.

Now onto what has been happening with community members.

Fran and Eddie traveled with other Catholic Work-

ers to bear witness at the SOA (the annual vigil to close the School of Americas). This is a way to show that there is a very close connection to our Works of Mercy. When a government is willing to train others to kill their people, we feel the call to witness against this form of government. Fran is still working at IPN and doing bookkeeping for her Spanish teacher. She is also helping edit a book. All these things keep very her busy.

Eddie spent Thanksgiving in Kentucky with his family and has been helping out at the Sweet Bee Info Shop on Mondays and Wednesdays. He is still in class at DMACC. Although no longer working at Home Recycling, he is busier than ever.

Mike is doing well in recovering from his stroke and is back to work at Kum and Go. I'm sure all of the prayers he received helped his recovery.

Jacob is going to school and working at DMACC. He is doing less computer work, because Mona has now taken that over. He has been sick with kidney stones and could use some extra prayers.

Bill and Jack are in their last weeks at the Worker. Bill will be visiting other Catholic Worker communi-

ties to find a new home. He has been a great addition to our community. He has the heart of an elephant and the attitude of a saint. He is the best minimalist dishwasher I have ever met. Keep him in your prayers as he continues on his next journey. We love you, Petsche.

Norman has been swamped sorting clothing donations. (See his article)

Jackie, James and I took a weekend trip to visit our aunts. We had a great time and learned more of our family history. Jackie is looking forward to winter break from the Drake Student Health Clinic and just celebrated her 44 birthday.

Mona has been with us

three months. She has changed the face of the webpage, coordinated the SODaPOP housing, and been a mistress chef. What a woman. She put up with Frank while he was in jail, which is no easy feat. She has a great sense of humor and fits into our community like she's been here for years. She spent Thanksgiving with her family in Burlington. She also gave a dynamic speech at the Peace Demonstration. (See her article)

Mohammed is working as a translator and loves it. He is a cleaning machine. He is a leader by example, a true blessing and amazes us with his wisdom.

Continued on page 7



(Left to right) Ed Bloomer, Brian Terrell, Sally Frank, Dagmar Hoxie, and Fran Fuller attended the 18th annual Vigil to Close the School of Americas, held November 16-18 in Fort Benning, GA. For more information about the powerful action, visit www.soaw.org.



Hello! It's me, Norman Searah. My friend and neighbor Victor is going to do his article for the next issue of the v.p. And, Frank tells me I have to do one about Christmas even though tomorrow is Thanksgiving. It's starting to snow outside, so at least it looks like Christmas. I'm sitting at McDonald's, writing this article, and I notice a lot of the people here are our guests at the Catholic Worker. I guess it's because today, which is Wednesday, the DMCW is closed.

I often think that students should live in boxes for more than one night to see what it is like to be homeless to get a little of a better idea and maybe that would help them do more research on the poor and homeless. They might be surprised what you learn.

Norman's Whereabouts

It being Thanksgiving time, I've discovered the poor and the homeless are often thankful for what they get just as our troops in this war in the Iraq and other wars like in WWII. My mother told me that in WWII people used to go to train stations and pass out food to troops to show they cared. I recall a song from the 60s. It was a Christmas one about Snoopy and the Red Baron. At that time I thought it was cool.

Just recently I learned that in the middle of the WWI, on Christmas Eve a one-day Christmas truce was called, and all sides agreed to stop fighting for a day. Some of the soldiers on the front lines started to sing Christmas carols, and when each side heard the others singing they came out of their trenches and joined each other in singing Christmas songs and sharing Christmas greetings. It must have been good to feel like human

beings for once and to share something in common. It must have been mind-blowing for the generals that didn't understand. The hurtful thing was the day after when they went back to killing one another. WWI was supposed to be the war to end all wars, but we still have wars! Why? I would like to know!

Right now it's Thanksgiving, and I recall the first Thanksgiving when the American Indians helped the White Man at that time. Over the years the American Indians have fought with us in our wars; and I don't know if we ever really apologized for all the bad things we did against the American Indians. Today many are diabetics and alcoholics, most are poor, except for the ones who won casinos. A lot of American Indians are homeless too. But some are trying to remember their history, language and culture. They want to bring back

the old ways of their ancestors, and, by learning what they used to be, they can help others too.

We all thought we were a melting pot of many different peoples, like in New York City. These days most new people are from Mexico and other countries south of us. They come to work. They end up taking jobs no one here wants, like picking our vegetables and fruits for days on end for very little money, so they can send some back to their families.

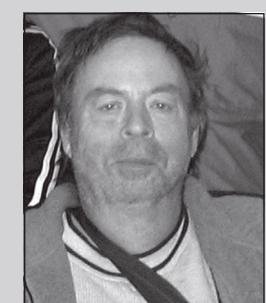
Yet I learned that some farmers that rely on immigrants to help pick their fields of vegetables and fruits are not finding the help they need. It's kind of like what we are hearing about the honey farmers who depend on bees to gather the honey, and the bees are disappearing. As I watched people eating their Thanksgiving meals, I thought about the people who pick our food and

work in packing plants so we can eat.

I also thought about the African Americans that came to America as slaves and how in the civil war they fought for the North, like they have fought and served in all of our wars since. They were always fighting on two fronts, one here at home and the other on the front lines of wars outside the country.

Mostly though I think wars anywhere anytime are not good, nor do they make things better.

Merry Christmas everybody!



A Christmas Comeuppance

Continued from page 1

From the commercials trying to persuade me that life isn't complete without some silly doodad to the canned music in stores that is played to manipulate my emotions into buying more doodads, I want to wrap myself in plastic to avoid getting any of it on me and white knuckle through it until it's over. It's not that Christmas has little to do with the birth of Christ that has swayed me toward avoiding the wholesale aberration. It's that it has even less to do with the life of Christ.

Why is that when we do consider Jesus at Christmas, it's about the baby in the manger and not the Sermon on the Mount? Why are we more taken with the wise men and harking angels than Jesus accepting a drink from the Samaritan woman or what he meant when he said "love your enemies?" Why do we speak more of gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh than gifts that require turning the other cheek?

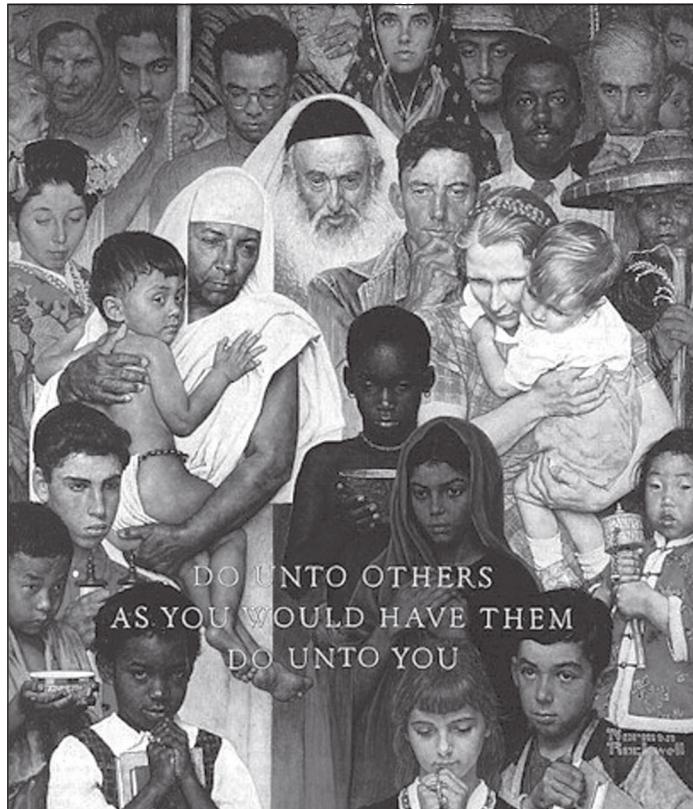
However, no matter how cynical I become, something inevitably interferes with my near consummate derision of the holiday.

It was the late 1970s when my best friend Michael and I had planned all year to make this "our best Christmas ever." The plan included Michael's "dream coat." It wasn't just that Michael was due for a new coat. He was. His old, though still warm, coat was four years old and looked it. He was holding out for "the coat," the one in the Neiman Marcus catalogue, cashmere, fur-trimmed, and the perfect replica of a coat he dreamed of having since he'd been ten. Michael did without a lot of things for a long time to afford that coat. What he wasn't squirreling away for the coat, he was saving for a Christmas blast for us and our respective lovers. Our fantasy blast necessarily included us relishing the party with him in that coat. He ordered the coat two weeks before Christmas, and we would have noticed the coat was late in being shipped, except for something else.

A nasty, bitter little man named Carl, who was chronically drunk and unemployed for being drunk, hated Michael for no discernible reason. Out of simple malice, the week before Christmas, Carl had gone into the place where Michael worked and told a lie convincing

enough for Michael to be fired. In the meantime, a frozen pipe that needed repair took everything I had saved for Christmas, and the promotion I'd been promised (in an unabashed burst of sexism by my boss) was given to a less qualified man, so the extra income I'd counted on for many things wasn't happening either. Our disappointed lovers rose to the occasion by dumping us, a day apart, because we weren't "financially reliable."

It was Christmas Eve and the part of the holiday my children spent with their father. Michael and I had twenty spare dollars to our name, and a right to sing the blues. We decided to go to our favorite bar (favorite because it was cheap) and have a



drink. As we were leaving, UPS arrived with "the coat." Michael slipped into it. It was like hearing sad music play. He looked stunning in it, but it was beauty with an ache.

We were at a table in the corner, had just received our drinks, and were about to construct our own little wailing wall, when Carl walked out of the rest room and returned to the bar stool where he'd been sitting.

"Perfect." Michael snarled, "He's exactly who I wanted to see tonight."

"Well," I said offering a sarcastic toast. "This is as good as life gets."

This sarcastic phrase became our snide chorus to the verses of our blues medley. Taking turns we mockingly quoted those who had contributed to our recent blows, and then sang, "This is as good as life gets!" For example:

I quoted my boss, "Don't

think I don't know you're fantastic, Mona. If you were a man, you'd have this promotion, but Bill is almost as good as you, and a man must provide for a family. I know you have kids, but you can find a man to support you."

"This is as good as life gets!"

Michael quoted his lover, "Michael, I love you, but let's face it, if you cared about 'us,' you'd have found a way to keep your job. I'm sorry, but I can't trust you now."

"This is as good as life gets!"

We did this for a good hour (or two), and, in short order, we were laughing like pot-smoking hyenas. We were limp from laughing. Our hands slid off each others faces as we wiped away the wet mirth.

or soul. Feeling blessed is a gift. Unconcerned with our worthiness or how dire our tragedy, Grace breaks through the dark and splashes the light of love undeniably over us just because that's what Grace does. And, however unpredictable it is, it is the persistent intrusion of Grace in the midst of despair that proves wrong our doubt that Good can prevail.

I also began to see the purpose of dreams and the importance of following them. Dreams are not a shopping list we give to God, so God knows what to give us. Dreams are God's gift to us so we know which road to take. Dreams don't come true when we snare the object of the dream, because we often don't. Dreams come true when we recognize the dream has led us to a place where we didn't know we wanted to go.

Outside this epiphany, a seeming bit of karma had ensued in the bar. While Carl had been in the restroom, someone had stolen his coat. He railed to the bartender, who could do nothing but shrug, apologize, and give Carl drinks on the house for the rest of the night. As peeved as he was, Carl stayed to enjoy a gratis binge.

Carl never saw us there. Nor did he ever know that as we left that it was Michael who took off "the coat" and gave it to the bartender.

"Give this to Carl. He needs it more than I do."

When we arrive at that place where showing love for enemies makes sense, no matter how mundane the setting, it is then that the reality of Christmas is expressed. It is in those ordinary moments when we know it is only reasonable to give the best we

have to the least of our brethren that we celebrate the life Christ taught and lived. Since we tend to give commensurate to the blessing that we feel, Michael's gesture was neither generous nor saintly, it was simply appropriate. It was Christmas.

That year turned out to be one of the easier ones Michael and I would face. Knowing you're blessed prevents neither death nor tragedy. Several years later, on an evening when we knew Michael would die soon, I would rock him in my arms and confess into his neck how much I hated it that I was about to lose him.

"Me too," he admitted, "I don't want to die now, but look at us here, wrapped around each other still loving each other this much after thirty years. This is as good as life gets."

Michael died the day after Christmas that year. I was flattened on my couch that night simultaneously feeling utterly inconsolable and utterly blessed. I knew my particular grief was slight witness of the grief and horror in human experience. But, I also knew my grief was irrefutable evidence that I had been blessed, and this filled me with a peculiar and powerful urge to give. I knew this in the midst of weeping, when the last verse of my favorite carol began playing on the radio.

*Then pealed the bells
more loud and deep;
"God is not dead, nor
dost He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the
right prevail,
With Peace on earth,
good will to men."*

May you be blessed this Christmas and in the years to come and give of yourself accordingly.

Visit our new and improved web site!

There is a wealth of information on our frequently updated web site including recent news, photos, videos, educational materials, activities, and upcoming actions and events. Check it often.



www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

Inside hope and Palestine



by John Tuzcu

I've recently returned from a two-week experience in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and parts of Israel. I traveled on an Interfaith Peace-Builders delegation with twenty-two other North Americans with varying curiosities and motivations. IFPB began in 2000 as a response to the increasing violence in the region following the failure of the "peace process." It is a project of the Fellowship of Reconciliation that stands in support of both Palestinians and Israelis striving to end the occupation, protect universal human rights and ensure a just and lasting peace for all involved. These goals have been self-evident to me since I began thinking about the conflict so this opportunity came my way with much anticipation.

Being raised on American media, I've been thoroughly exhausted by the hysteria that surrounds this conflict. So I was longing to engage with people on the ground and feel the tensions with my own nervous system unencumbered by mediation and hearsay. Though you may not have the chance to do the same, I will provide a few reflections of my experiences here as only I felt and understood them.

We are in a period of human history where media representations of people(s), cultures, nations, religions and entire societies enjoy unfounded authority. We cannot prevent these images from playing a role in our conception of the world but we do have the ability to resist their dominance and mitigate their impact. Human to human contact continues to be indispensable to achieve more accurate and true conceptions of each other.

This shattering of mediation is the highlight of such delegations, especially in a time when the image of the Arab as perceived in mainstream North America is increas-

ingly demonized and made monolithic; all particularities are dismissed. These images make it increasingly difficult for us to understand the nuanced and fragmented composition of individuals and cultures--assuming this is a moral goal we strive for. Hence, a recurring plea I heard coming from Palestinians was to return to the U.S. with a bold message "Palestinians are not terrorists; we are not barbarians." It is damning in itself that such pronouncements even need to be made.

What one of our Israeli hosts frankly summed up might also be said about Americans; "The average Israeli is convinced that all Palestinians are terrorists who would kill them if they could." saying, "They are driven by sixty years of fear."

Jerusalem, mentioning the Palestinian homes that had been there just before and the families that had lived in them.

The new Israeli settlers entered the community through force, by wiping out a home that had previously been a neighbor to others in East Jerusalem for years, not via welcome or friendship. To allay the symptoms of such a take-over, the new inhabitants were accorded private security forces to guard their fortified establishment and escort their kids to school in private vans with automatic rifles in tow. I wondered why anyone would choose to subject themselves to such a lifestyle.

We met with the head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs who gave us a raw account of all the

strip. Despite the astronomical power imbalance between the Israeli state and the Palestinians, we cannot rank individual pain and suffering. Israelis in Sderot were very open in sharing their anxieties, as one of our hosts commented: "Schools are not secure. Homes are not secure. People have eating disorders. Crime is up. Divorce is up. The most important thing is there is no hope. I am a very rational person but I see no hope. There is no post-trauma here. It does not stop. It is ongoing trauma."

Another Israeli shared her shame: "I am living in Sderot for 20 years. I never lost my empathy with the other side. I find myself awake at night unable to sleep, not because of the kassams but because of the Israeli army. For a time they bombed 24 hours a day. They committed crimes. Sometimes I feel ashamed of what the

have saved one soul, one life."

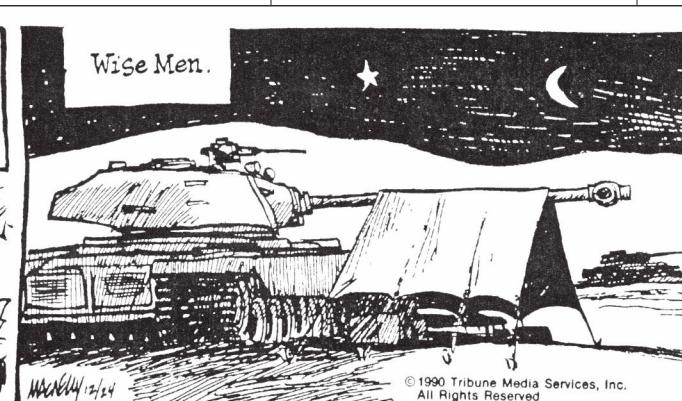
The Israeli partner, Rami Elhannan, described the loss of his daughter to a suicide bomber: "We heard there had been a bombing. We called her cell phone, but she did not respond. You hope this finger will not turn to you. You run from police station to police station, hospital to hospital; and you find yourself in a morgue, and the finger is stuck on your forehead in a way you will never forget."

He personified the remarkable evolution that needs to be made by so many of us if peace is ever to become a possibility, to see the other as ourselves and ourselves as the other: "When we were asked who is to blame, we said the occupation is to blame. We sat Shiva for seven days, and on the eighth day you are alone. You have to decide what to do with the unbearable pain and anger. You want to get revenge when someone kills your 14-year-old girl. Then you ask yourself, will killing someone else ease your pain? The other option is to ask what happened and why. What made someone so angry that he would blow up people?"

As these passages maintain, Palestinians are not the only ones in this conflict that suffer from misrepresentations and over-generalizations. The Israeli people, though differently, are also fastened to a narrow, homogenous narrative and is a victim of media distortion. There are many in Israel that want to escape the cycle of violence, object to the state of Israel's racist and oppressive policies and speak out against such moral and legal offenses.

The story of Israeli peacemakers often goes untold, though not if you listen to members of the Bereaved Parents Circle. This is an organization formed by Israelis and Palestinians that have lost children or relatives in this conflict. They speak together for an end to occupation, with the wisdom that the last 40 years of fear of each other has achieved only bloodshed on both sides: "We give 1000 lectures in high schools, Israel and Palestinian. We do not talk politics. We talk of feelings. If even one kid nods, we

Bassam Aramin, one



As any of us are attentive to our image, Palestinians are conscious of the way in which they are often portrayed in the U.S. and the implications this has on their communities. The more they are demonized the smoother we can dominate them. This is the logic that underlies all imperial projects, not least of which can be found in the Holy Land today. I witnessed this chilling dynamic, one people over another, crushing their neighbor. The darker sides of humanity.

The first day we met with members of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, a non-violent, direct action organization established to resist demolition of Palestinian homes by Israel. They oppose and challenge land expropriation, ongoing settlement expansion, by-pass road construction, policies of closure and separation. They gave us a firsthand tour of all these features of modern occupation. We saw Palestinian homes in rubble that had met their demolition a third time over. They pointed out Israeli settlements in the middle of Palestinian East

obstacles and subsequent results of occupation: the separation wall that is annexing over 10% of Palestinian land in the West Bank, the 149 settlements and eight settlement blocks that continue to expand and to be made contiguous, 96 outposts, more than 100 checkpoints, 27 Israeli military bases and a vast array of trenches, road gates, roadblocks, earth mounds and road barriers to restrict Palestinian movement keeping people from necessities like health, education, family and friends. Note these are within the West Bank, not along the perimeter. Imagine the land that is left for Palestinians after accounting for all these obstructions in an area that is already very sparse. The new maps are startling, making the future of a two-state solution as conventionally proposed quite bleak. I encourage anyone to pull up the UN OCHA website and judge for themselves.

Following this presentation we traveled to Sderot, an Israeli town that has been terrorized daily by kassam rocket fire from the nearby Gaza

occupation has made of the Israeli state."

As these passages maintain, Palestinians are not the only ones in this conflict that suffer from misrepresentations and over-generalizations. The Israeli people, though differently, are also fastened to a narrow, homogenous narrative and is a victim of media distortion. There are many in Israel that want to escape the cycle of violence, object to the state of Israel's racist and oppressive policies and speak out against such moral and legal offenses.

The story of Israeli peacemakers often goes untold, though not if you listen to members of the Bereaved Parents Circle. This is an organization formed by Israelis and Palestinians that have lost children or relatives in this conflict. They speak together for an end to occupation, with the wisdom that the last 40 years of fear of each other has achieved only bloodshed on both sides: "We give 1000 lectures in high schools, Israel and Palestinian. We do not talk politics. We talk of feelings. If even one kid nods, we

Continued on page 7

Giuliani and Clinton Iowa Campaign Headquarters Occupied, 18 Arrested



by Michael Gillespie

DES MOINES—In simultaneous nonviolent actions, anti-war movement activist-peacemakers occupied the Iowa campaign headquarters of former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani in suburban Clive and Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) in Des Moines on November 8.

"We're very respectful of the [Iowa] Caucus[es] process and the long history behind it," said Voices for Creative Nonviolence (VCNV) coordinator Kathy Kelly at a rally at Nollen Plaza in Des Moines immediately preceding the occupations, "but we feel strongly that the issues of this war must be inserted into the process of narrowing down who the candidates for the presidential elections will be."

"This must be done on behalf of the people who have no voice but who have borne the cruelty and the suffering of this war even though they meant us no harm," said Kelly, who recently returned from Jordan where she met with Iraqi refugee families living in dire conditions after being forced by the war and threat of death to flee their homes and their country.

Brian Terrell, executive director of the Catholic Peace Ministry (CPM), explained to some 50 activist-peacemakers and their supporters who gathered for the rally that Giuliani and Clinton, the two most hawkish candidates of the Republican and Democratic parties, had been sent but had not responded to letters from VCNV asking them to pub-

licly pledge to end the war in Iraq, bring the troops home, rebuild Iraq, forswear military attacks on other countries, and fully fund health care for all Americans.

Peacemakers involved in Seasons of Our Discontent: A Presidential Occupation Project (SODaPOP), organized by VCNV, CPM, and the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community took their requests directly to the Iowa campaign headquarters of the two candidates.

"I'm an American, but I am not in support of the policies of our government, and I am working to change them," said Farah Moktareizadeh, of Philadelphia, PA, moments after she explained to a Giuliani staffer who declined to give her name that the activists would not leave voluntarily until they received a positive response to their request.

Joy First of Madison, WI, is affiliated with the Madison Pledge of Resistance and the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance. First said she traveled to Des Moines to take part in the SODaPOP occupations because she is very concerned about some of the candidates' positions.

"Right now we've got a criminal in the White House," said First, "and I'm worried that we're going to get another one if we get someone like Hillary Clinton or Rudy Giuliani."

"We've got to demand more from our leaders," said First, speaking in Giuliani's campaign headquarters as the names of Americans and Iraqis who have died in Iraq since March 2003 were read



Those arrested, left to right: Renee Espeland, Chrissy Kirchofer, Ron Durham, Elton Davis, Robert Braam, Ed Bloomer, Chris Gaunt, Mona Shaw, Jeff Leys, Nick Kinkel, Dan Pearson, Suzanne Sheridan, Kathy Kelly, David Goodner, and Brian Terrell. Photo insert: Farah Moktareizadeh.

aloud by her colleagues.

A campaign spokesperson, Jarrod Agen, said the protests would not affect Giuliani's position on the war. Agen said people with questions should attend Giuliani's question-and-answer events instead of occupying in his campaign's offices.

First and nine other peacemaker-activists were arrested by Clive Police Department officers after they refused to leave Giuliani's campaign headquarters.

Arrested were Ed Bloomer, 60, Des Moines; Elton Davis, 45, Des Moines; Mickey Davis, 16, Waukee, IA; Ron Durham, 26, Chicago, IL; First, 53; Kelly, 54, Chicago, IL; Nick Kinkel, 19, Des Moines; Jeff Leys, 43, Chicago, IL; Dan Pearson, 26, Chicago, IL; and Suzanne Sheridan, 31, Chicago, IL.

A similar scene was enacted at Clinton campaign headquarters a few miles away in Des Moines where many staffers and all volunteers vacated the campaign's headquarters and retreated to a second location as the occupation continued through the afternoon and into the evening.

While a skeleton crew of Clinton campaign staffers

declined to interact with them, activist-peacemakers read aloud the names of the dead in Iraq; covered Clinton campaign signage with their own "End the Iraq War" signs and photos of Iraqi children; took over Clinton campaign telephones and, until they were disconnected, called registered voters to inform them of Hillary Clinton's votes in favor of the war and funding for the war; and read aloud Martin Luther King, Jr.'s April 1967 speech at Riverside Church titled "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence."

This reporter and another, Mike Ferner, of Toledo, OH, visited the former Hillary Clinton for president exploratory committee offices and found campaign workers and volunteers there hunkered down behind locked doors, apparently fearing another occupation.

Clinton aide Mark Daley said his candidate opposes the war but offered no timetable for withdrawal.

In a statement, Daley said, "Senator Clinton absolutely understands and shares their concerns about this war. She could not be any more clear, if our current president does not end this war, when she is president, she will."

At about 8:30 pm, Clinton campaign state director Teresa Vilmain arrived at the occupied headquarters offices and ordered all SODaPOP activists-peacemakers and media personnel to leave immediately under threat of arrest.

Arrested by Des Moines Police Department officers were Robert Braam, 51, Manhattan, IL; Renee Espeland, 46, Des Moines; Chris Gaunt, 51, Grinnell, IA; David Goodner, 26, Iowa City; Chrissy Kirchofer, Marseilles, IL; Moktareizadeh, 24, Philadelphia, PA; Mona Shaw, 56, Des Moines; and Terrell, 51, Maloy, IA.

Local newspaper, television, and radio news personnel visited the occupations throughout the afternoon and evening and were present for the arrests.

VCNV coordinator Jeff Leys said additional SODaPOP occupations were planned for the run-up to the Iowa Caucuses in early January and perhaps beyond.

Michael Gillespie is a freelance journalist. This column was first published in "The Independent Monitor: the national newspaper of Arab Americans."



SODaPOP Returns Jan. 1 for the Iowa Caucuses

A partial schedule for the action includes:

Tuesday, January 1

7 pm: Welcome to SODaPOP and Scenario Planning Meeting, Sweet Bee Infoshop, 513 East 6th Street, Des Moines.

Wednesday, January 2

9 am: Nonviolence Training at the Infoshop. This training is required for all "occupiers."

1 pm: Press Conference and Sendoff Rally at Infoshop.

Afternoon: Occupations of Pro-war Presidential Candidates' Campaign Offices.

7 pm: Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Nonviolence addresses the Caucus of the Future (www.caucusofthefuture.com) followed by satirical singer/

songwriter Dave Lippman (www.davelippman.com) and George Shrub, the world's only known singing CIA agent. The evening event takes place at Drake University Legal Clinic, 2400 University Ave., Des Moines.

Thursday, January 3,

9 am: Nonviolence Training, required for all "occupiers" at the Infoshop.

Afternoon: Occupations of Pro-war Presidential Candidates' Campaign Offices.

Contact: Brian Terrell, Catholic Peace Ministry 515-255-8114, Terrellcpm@yahoo.com

The Iowa campaign is organized by Voices for Creative Nonviolence, Des Moines Catholic Peace Ministry, and the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community. For more information go to the DMCW website at www.desmoinescatholicworker.org.

On January 3, 2008, the eyes of the nation and the world will be on Iowa, when Iowa becomes the first state in the nation to choose who will be the next president of the United States. Seasons of Discontent: a Presidential Occupation Project (SODaPOP) will turn the national spotlight on the people as well as on these candidates. Please join this exciting and important opportunity for the voices of peacemakers to be heard in a powerful way.

Inside Hope and Palestine*Continued from page 5*

of these former combatants, spoke to us about his 10-year-old daughter who was shot to death by Israeli soldiers. He showed us her picture and the schoolbag she was carrying that day. "They killed her twice," he said, "once when they shot her and once when they closed the file and said they were not involved."

When considering how overused and misused words like reconciliation and dialogue have become, Bassam offers us an earnest admonishment that is worth remembering: "Jewish groups oppose Palestinian suffering but do not want to give up East Jerusalem. Some say, 'They killed my son; they killed my daughter; we are equal.' No. We are not equal. We are equal as parents but not equal in the struggle. You are

an occupier. When we talk, and then you send your son back to the checkpoint, our conversation meant nothing."

Rami Elhanan, Bassam Aramin and others embody the power of breaking taboo, defying tired definitions and resisting realities and fates that have been carved out for us of which we are not even aware. As we recognize and share in each other's suffering, we cannot negate the inequalities that shape and order our lives nor the structures that we ourselves are complicit in upholding. To reach each other most honestly, we must confront how we violate and disregard one another with truth and ambition. The Israelis and Palestinians I've mentioned are doing this. They are the "Israelis" and "Palestinians" I think about today.

**"Die In" at Omaha Strategic Space and Defense Conference**

Three Omaha Catholic peace activists, Fr Jack Mc Caslin, 78, Peg Gallagher, 79, and Omaha Catholic Worker Jerry Ebner, 57, were arrested October 10th during a "Die in" at the second annual Strategic Space and Defense Conference held at the Quest Center in Omaha, Nebraska. They were charged with "refusing to leave," a City of Omaha municipal misdemeanor. The maximum penalty is a \$500 fine and/or six months in jail. Their trial date is set for December 14.

This was the second year the Quest Center hosted the Strategic Space and Defense Conference. Otherwise known as a "Weapons in Space Bazaar," the conference is sponsored exclusively by OFFUTT AFB and STRATCOM with the full blessing of the city of Omaha. At this conference defense contractors and corporations buy and sell military and space weapons to the US Government and Defense Department. This year's humble protest is the beginning of a yearly tradition to build support for kicking this hellish event out of Omaha and the dismantling of the STRATCOM mission stationed at Offutt AFB.

For more information contact: Jerry Ebner [omahacw@gmail.com], Omaha Catholic Worker, 1104 N. 24th Street, Omaha, NE 68102, 402-502-5887.

Join the 29th Annual Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat

The Des Moines and Omaha Catholic Worker communities invite you to make your celebration of Christmas complete by joining us as we explore the often ignored and deeper meaning of the season.

Referencing the infant narrative from the Gospel of Matthew, we will examine the links between King Herod's killing of the innocent children in Bethlehem and the murderous deeds of US-backed modern-day Herods. The Herods of Je-

sus's day were backed-up by the legions of the Roman armies. Our modern-day Herods are backed by the United States global military presence and Offutt's nuclear and space commands.

This year's retreat takes place in the basement of St. John's Church on Creighton University campus at 2500 California Plaza, Omaha NE. The retreat begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, December 26th, and ends Friday, December 29th, at 1 p.m. with a Vigil and Line Crossing at Offutt AFB on Thursday, December 28th.

Contacts for the retreat are:

Frank Cordaro
Berrian Catholic Worker House
713 Indiana Ave., Des Moines IA 50314
515-282-4781
Cell: 515-490 2490, or

Jerry Ebner
Omaha Catholic Worker
1104 N 24th St, Omaha NE 68102
402-502- 5887

Midwest CW Resistance Retreat set for Kansas City, April 26-28

Kansas City Area Catholic Workers announce with excitement the, "Midwest Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat" April 26-28, 2008, in Kansas City, Mo. The focus of the retreat will be on immigration.

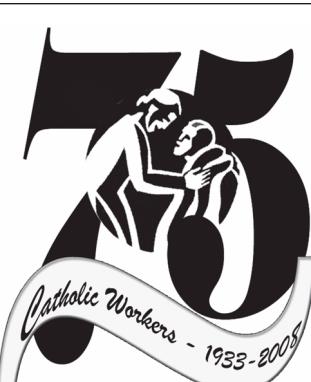
Please save the date. More details will come soon.

Hosting Catholic Workers communities and contacts are:

Cherith Brook CW
3226 E. 12th St.
Kansas City, MO 64127
913-209-3864
jegarbison@yahoo.com

Shalom CW House
2100 N. 13th St.
Kansas City, KS 66104
913-321-2206
bgrabs@juno.com

Holy Family CW House
912 E. 31st St.
Kansas City, MO 64109
816-756-3019
816-753-2677
holyfamilycw@hotmail.com



The 75th Anniversary of the Catholic Worker Movement will be celebrated at a gathering on July 9-13, 2008, at Our Lady of Mount Carmel/Saint Anne Parish Center in Worcester, MA.

Worcester Catholic Workers and friends are hosting the celebration.

Dorothy Day, with Peter

Catholic Worker Movement Marks 75th Anniversary

Maurin, founded the Catholic Worker movement in 1933 with the intent of creating a community in which it would be "easier to be good."

Scott Shaeffer-Duffy advised *via pacis*, "Please tell people that details will be coming soon, but people should mark their calendars and let us know if they are coming. We especially need to know how many can bring a sleeping bag and sleep on the floor and how many need a bed. We want the event to be free to all comers. Travel costs will be high

for many given how far we are from the West coast."

Contact persons for the celebration are:

Claire and Scott Schaeffer-Duffy
ThereseCW@gmail.com
Saints Francis and Therese Catholic Worker
508-753-3588

Michael Boover
mboover@annamaria.edu
Annunciation House
508-753-8974

A web page for the 75th anniversary gathering is at: www.pieandcoffee.org/cw2007

Community News*Continued from page 3*

Frank is out of jail. He did 30 days at a private detention center in Missouri. It was not totally unexpected. The government thinks that imprisonment will change the hearts and souls of non-violent civil disobedience resisters. How sadly mistaken they are. He is the same old Frank, a true believer in the power of resistance. (See *Editor's Notes*.)

Irving has been up to his ears in laundry. He never complains. He has been busy canning and finding stuff to do with the older boys gone.

Jordan's grades were very good. He is finally turning the corner. He helped me talk to a group of ladies about the Catholic Worker. I was very proud of him.

John T. is back from Palestine. He is a great young man and has truly shown himself to be a person of conviction. He is a great addition to our community. We are glad he is back safe and sound. (See *his article*).

Kirk Brown is the newest member of our community. He is so new I can't think of anything to say about him. I am sure I will if he is still around come the next issue of the v.p.

We have truly been through a challenging year and remain blessed by the power of community. We continue to do our small part to make this a better society. I hope everyone has a blessed holiday season. Keep us in your prayers and we will do the same.

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